

## Commander's Comments

“

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By Lt. Col.  
Ronald N. Light  
HED Commander

# Change: More than just fresh paint

For those of you who work in or around Building 230, the District Headquarters, you've noticed a lot of activity lately. And a lot of change. Finally, the building is getting a facelift with fresh paint. I want to use the painting of our building as a model to discuss what we have together accomplished during the past 15 months.

If you've ever painted anything, you know that preparation is the key to a successful job. A good painter will clean the surface of dirt, caulk and spackle holes and cracks, and scrape off loose paint and scaling before the first drop of paint touches a brush or roller.

During the past 15 months, I have asked you to do a lot of preparation. Together we have used DrChecks, and conducted after action reviews, to grow an ethic in the District of continuous learning. Of improvement. Of introspection. We have prepared project management plans, as a tool to prepare us for successful project execution. We have developed and we are living our 14-Point Customer Commitment Plan.

Has our preparation been perfect in these areas? No. However, we have built upon the notions that we are planners... that we continuously learn... and that we are committed to customer service, and we are beginning to reap great benefits. Our preparation doesn't stop there.

Our Operations Plan, training guidance, leadership development program, and mission essential task list work have set definable, achievable standards for *your* training and development. We have a solid plan to give you skills to make you successful, and we've backed our intent up with a slice of our budget. We've also conducted resume, interview, effective meetings, and TAPES special training sessions. This training is aimed at you: to give you the skills to be more marketable, better prepared, and better informed. More training is planned on conducting after action reviews, and

empowerment. This training is about preparation, and it's also about us. *This District is our Ohana, and we take care of each other.*

We are preparing in other areas, too. You have heard about ISO 9001. This concept of plan, do, check, and act will help us prepare for, and achieve, more consistent quality across all aspects of the work we do for customers. Work at Schofield Barracks, Wheeler Army Airfield, Fort Shafter, and the Pohakuloa Training Area. At Tripler Army Medical Center. At Hickam Air Force Base. In Kwajalein and the Republic of Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia. On the islands of American Samoa, and on the islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. On the Republic of Palau. And all over the State of Hawaii. We do quality work now, and we are preparing to get even better.

Work is in development for other areas of preparation. Every member of the District deserves a safe, clean, efficient work environment. We are going to renovate the work environment for our Fort Shafter Resident Office team members. We are going to find a decent work environment for our logistics and contracting team members. And, by the way, we have been hiring new team members: during Fiscal Year 01 we hired 36 people to meet our growing workload, and we have another 30 or so hiring actions in progress.

So...during the past 15 months we've done a lot of preparation. We've established systems and processes, some of which were sorely needed. In other cases, we correctly anticipated USACE initiatives (After Action Reviews...more customer feedback venues...emphasis on leadership development), and as I've noted before, we are ahead of the power curve. The District *has* undergone great change in the past three years, and a lot of change in the past 15 months.

I want you to know...that I know at times some of you are overwhelmed. And I want you to know...that we have not made change for change's sake. While we have not anticipated every change, we have found a way to minimize the impacts of change outside our control. (An example: implementation of Corps Path training, which we will interweave with existing leadership development program requirements.)

Yes, the past 15 months have brought change. All organizations face change; all Districts face change. At the end of the day, organizations—Districts—are judged by how well they managed change. What we've tried to do during the past 15 months is underscore change as *preparation*. Preparation to make us more efficient, make us better, make us stronger, more adaptable, more resilient. This is who we are, and we are getting there!

Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, said of change: "...the last of the human freedoms: to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances...." You face such a choice when change occurs in the District. I salute those of you who have stayed the course, borne change with spirit and dignity, and helped us prepare.

An organization the size of ours requires a lot of preparation for change, just as our building requires a lot of preparation for painting. When we have prepared thoroughly, the finished results—in terms of customer service, quality, and taking care of our Ohana—are stunning. Thank you for your support of our preparation to make Honolulu Engineer District the best place for the best people to work!

*It wouldn't surprise me to see them rebuild the World Trade Center even higher—to make it clear that they cannot be forced to their knees. —Alfred Defago, former Swiss ambassador to the United States*